

XPD – Tasmania – One Extreme Adventure

TEAM MOUNTAIN DESIGNS–TRI ADVENTURE

THE ANXIOUS WAIT....The team arrived in Burnie on Sunday in plenty of time for the 0900 start on Wednesday....so we go shopping at Woolies and check out Burnie....

MONDAY... The official opening ceremony and briefing was on Monday where we had photo shoot and gear check...now this was funny!! There were teams with some gear that would barely pass inspection.... The fast international teams seemed not to worry too much about their gear actually working... We all fitted into our tent nicely and our sleeping mats would actually keep out the cold (they came built into our Salomon packs...), unlike what we saw some teams with.



We spent the rest of the day packing and unpacking our gear and bikes numerous times....trying to anticipate what we might need. We did some shopping....and shopped again and again. Woolies in Burnie had never seen these sights before. Teams with lists, checking out every aisle....stock-piling trollies with packets and tins of 'easy to eat' foods....lots and lots of lollies and chocolates and treats! Food sorting at our cabin....Gary was making 'towers' out of his transition foods.... From this point on, all of our tins were referred to as 'towers'....it's a whole new term in AR!!

PASTA BUFFET – MONDAY NIGHT... Well, we ate heaps....and I was beginning to feel like a cow being fattened up to send off to market as we had been doing nothing really for days....just eating, drinking (red wine of course), sorting, unsorting, packing, unpacking.... I had to go for a walk along the beach at night just to get some fresh air....It's still light in Burnie at 8.00pm....

TUESDAY... The wait is over, the course is unveiled... We watch an overview of what we have ahead of us.... 15 legs, mid-camp isn't even half way....very remote areas where only helicopters can rescue! We are warned about the likelihood of encountering snakes, swimming in cold water, compulsory gear washes to stop the spread of seeds and diseases from one area of wilderness to the other....and finally, that we were to start and finish in Burnie!! Maps – there were over 30 of them.... The course booklet had over 60 pages. We are in for one extreme adventure!!! Boxes and bikes have to be in by 5.00pm, so we start our map-prep from mid-camp to the finish (so we can put these maps in the boxes). We now plan

our gear for Box A, B, C, D & E...and bike box and kayak bag so we have 'TA food'(towers!) and 'Leg food' for each box. We use 100's of snap-locks...small, medium and large. I had 12 Leg bags and 5 Tower bags...how on earth was I going to consume this much food???

WEDNESDAY Race Day.... Leg 1... 17km Ocean Paddle. We arrive at the beach 2 hours before the start....get boats to the beach.... 1 x Sevylor (which has to be



pumped up and seats fitted) and 1 x Toy-boy (plastic) which Pikey and I somehow managed to get to the start....and of course, Gary is right at the other end of the beach - at the best getaway point! Then we have a bit of team mutiny....where Lukey, Pikey and I all opt for paddle shoes and not runners so we can at least have dry shoes for Leg 2.... Gary tries

to get me to ditch my Cag pants....I say no, I'm wearing them....and thank goodness I did as I was borderline for the whole paddle....and Gary was cold. At CP 1 I was happy to jump out of the boat and run 100m to the control....and then it was onto Penguin to the TA. We came in 7th - a great start - just over 3 hours....

Leg 2...20km Trek + Clay Pigeon Shooting.... A short steep uphill run to the shooting was actually nice as it warmed us up from the paddle. Lukey did the shooting for the team, and hit 3 from 5

shots....so no penalty for us! We soon set off through the tracks and bush round the back of the shooting range (no short cuts here) and make our way up to CP 4 Mt Dial.....I have a great start - NOT - by pointing the guys SW instead of SE.....dopey me..... but we work it out quickly as a few teams scoot past us.....soon we are up for some more tricky off track nav.....and Gary has his head on the map and we waste little time and soon catch back up to those teams and see a few others along the way. As we travel along the Riana



ranges we get named the Aussie Bushwhackers as we bash down into Mt Duncan Creek to CP7. Jen & James from Photo events were excited to see us so far up in the field as we came into the TA at Riana.....we sign in in 8th place and do a quick blog.....team MD's are going great.....we build our bikes.....stuff in some food and soon we are out of there!

Legs 3,4,5 MTB 20k Caving MTB 50k - It's been a big day.....there is still plenty of light as we set off on the bike down some unbelievable descents out to Gunn's Plains Caves. We have a 1hr time out to complete the cave section where we must use a map to find 7CP's in the caves. Time starts when we enter the caves so we are quick to get our shoes on and we step down a ladder deep into the caves! The first 4 CP's are pretty easy in the main tourist section of the cave, then as it looks like we are exiting the cave we are directed through a small opening into another entirely different section of the cave.....soon we are crawling on all fours through narrow

tunnels, knee deep in freezing cold water.....there are about 6 teams scampering around looking for the final 2 CP's.....Gary has a plan.....the exit ladder may not really be the end of the caves....so up we go and we soon see there is another whole section ahead of us and of course the final 2 CP's! Great call Gary.....and soon we are back at our bikes.....but only have 8 mins still to sit out! No rest for Team MD's.....and certainly no "fluffing".....Now we have a 50k bike ahead of us.....and we have to ride back up the big descent.....OMG.....Lukey was on fire.....he towed Pikey who was towing me and then Gary jumped on board as well.....great team work! We hit the trails just as it was getting dark.....we were motoring along until my chain got wrapped around inside itself and caught somehow in my rear suspension.....tricky.....so Monster (Gary) jumps on the bike and I grab the bit of chain.....and soon I am back on the bike after a bit of "Rock n Roll" lube! We keep an eye on the teams that passed us on our way up to Leven Canyon. We arrive there at around 10pm.....and are delighted to see Aunty Jan on volunteer duties.....she says it's freezing.....we can tell!

Leg 6 – 60k Trek / Abseil / Swim etc. – What can I say.....other than "amazing" this leg had everything! We traversed the side of the Canyon in the dark, walked over a bridge over the canyon and eventually came to CP 13 in the creek. There were two other teams near us at this pointand met one just as we made our way to puzzle cave to CP14.....here we faced another scramble on all fours into a tiny section of the cave....where we would find the CP.....this is where being small really helps! We soon set off up a track to Black Bluff.....a very long climb where we were passed by team Buff.....(not sure why they were behind us though).....we found the CP 15 at Paddy's Lake but at the time I had no idea there was even a lake.....it was pitch black and sleety.....but the skies clear and starry! We could not really find the track we were looking for so went off the side of the bluff to get out of the wind.....soon we found ourselves bashing our way through alpine like scrub more suited to wombats.....making our progress rather slow and tiring.....As we descended onto Tiger Plain things were making a bit more sense and eventually made it to CP 16. The sun started to rise as we made our way to CP17 and we also located the race directors having a snooze in their car just before we hit Cradle Mt road.....Gary woke them of course....we had a chat and soon set off again! We were now heading to Reynolds Falls.....a very, very special place indeed! This place seemed millions and millions of years old, it was green mossy mystical and



untouched.....how lucky were we to be in this beautiful part of the world! As we are approaching the abseil...I ask Gary "Are we there yet?" he responds – "7 minutes"about 45 mins later we come across two volunteers trekking in the opposite direction....."Keep going they said.....it's not far.....the abseil has been cancelledtoo much water.....just follow the trail to the bottom!" We go past the abseil CP 18....punch and slide down the trail to the bottom of the waterfall....to the infamous "Rock Pool Rapids".....here we were told we would



Scary Rapids

have to 'swim'....but it was RAPIDS – strong currents & freezing cold water. I was petrified (having visions of my rapids episode in NZ) & Superman's Achilles heel was revealed – he could not swim! Both of us had to overcome huge obstacles to get through this part of the course. Gary proceeded without a worry. Luke, Pikey and I were clinging to the rocks like glue....and finally after leaping huge boulders across flowing rapids managed to embark on the 50m swim. I cheered Lukey on...and we all made it! We took a while to get our warm clothes on again and did everything in our power for the next 9km along the river, not to get swept downstream when crossing. We finished this trek just on dark.....after almost 22 hours.



LEG 7/8 – 8km Raft, 20km Paddle.... No time for fluffing, Gary had us on the water within minutes and soon we were navigating our way along Lake Mackintosh in the dark. We turned off our lights as it was easier to see the trees and obstacles popping up in front of us. I was freezing, and just wanted to get out of the wind and rain. So...when we got to the TA, I ran straight up to the fire. Pikey was hypothermic too and feeling tired, so we all bedded down for a 1 hour sleep.

We all put on dry thermals and, in what felt like SECONDS, we were up again and ready to set off on the 20km paddle. A lot warmer now, as there was less wind and rain, (and I put a lot of clothes on....2 thermals, fleece, Gore-Tex jacket, cag top and a buff! – and that was just on the top half!) We continued along this leg of the paddle which was quite enjoyable....except for the portage – this was around 2km and it was so, so hard....and long!!! Other teams had WHEELS....Why didn't we think of that??? Oh well, we Aussies like to do things the HARD WAY.... The final stretch of the paddle went really fast – but not fast enough for Gary who was fighting off the 'sleepmonsters'. We got to the TA at Tullah in daylight...and all in good spirits about to go into Day 3...(9hrs)...

LEG 9 – MTB 105k to Strahan/Mid Camp.... This ride was one of the highlights of the race. There was some amazing technical single track at the start.....which, in dry conditions, would have been awesome.....but because there had been so much rain in the lead up to the event.....it was a real challenge.....Team Columbia Vivraid rode these trails like kamikazes.....we just let them go.....not wanting to slip or crash and burn on this stuff.....even though both Gary & Pikey did have two spectacular crashes over the handlebars.....we got through the section relatively unscathed. The suspension bridge at Montezuma falls was a bit scarybecause I looked down below....AMAZING VIEW.... But.....at the same time I noticed there was a big gap....big enough for me and my bike to fall through – and if I wasn't careful and watch where I was going.....well I didn't really want to think about the consequencesso I just took it one step at a time. The Rail Trail was just awesome, and we had so much fun dodging and riding through puddles....like big

energy from gastro & Pikey has hurt his knee bending down to pick up some rubbish he found at CP 34)....every step is a struggle....but we continue on and all I want is a hot chicken.....Gary promises me we will get one.....we catch Team Techno....again.....we make a small nav error and cross a river.....and somehow it turns out in our favour.....we get into Granvillethere is nothing there, no shops, no pub, no nothing no CHICKEN.....but we made it! It is at this point we realise that the next bike could take us 20hrs.....and at the rate we are travelling we have no chance of making the paddle darks-zone.....so we opt for a sleep till light.....so I can regain some energy and Pikey can see if his knee is any better as we have a 150k bike ahead of us!

Leg 11 MTB 150k - We started out around 7am.....so we were fresh and well rested.....a few teams had come and gone whilst we were sleeping but honestly I was glad to have had the break.....we

had good tides and good light to navigate the tricky beach section, through some more sand dunes onto some inland tracks. Lukey was doing the Nav, Gary was towing me.....and Pikey.....was just hanging on! We hit some muddy 4WD tracks and soon we were in open farmland at CP 37.....then it was bitumen and an awesome descent into Corinna.....we arrive in 11th place



we left Granville in 15th (we saw no other teams.....and hear later that some teams spent many hours lost in sand dunes unable to locate the tracks). At Corinna we had two Kayaks to get our bikes, the team and a volunteer to the other side.....we learn that some locals had leant a paddle.....otherwise we would have been using our hands....we get to the other side.....it's nice to get a break..... It is now 10am....and there is a pub! Gary enters and orders a Canadian Club & Dryshares it with Pikey.....does not tell Superman.....we eat wraps, Gary consumes a can of chunky beef, we let our feet air an bit in the sun.....and soon set off again for the rest of the ride! On the long uphill ride out, we come across team Buff Thermacool (last year's World Champions).....their girl was sick (gastro) and they could not continue..... Gary uses a bystanders phone to get onto the event officials.....as the Buff Team could speak little English.....we also tell them how to use the spot device to send for help. Without wasting too much time we set off again.....up and up and up....a big climb.....but with a rewarding descent into Waratah.....this ride was not so bad after all....just long! We punch CP 39 at the information sign in the park....and raid the corner café.....no chicken....but we all share wedges , Gary eats heaps of corned beef....while the boys drink chocky milk and me Lucozade.....we let our feet dry out again....we don't fluff too much as we want to get through the forest before dark.....cause the nav can get tricky....we did not think we would make the paddle dark-zone.....but we would get more sleep. The trails into Arthurs Chalet CP 40 were just lovely.....until we make the final turn towards Farquars TA. Luke says "we have 10k to go....and I don't think this track looks too good".....well it was a mudfest.....in seconds we were covered neck to knee in mud.....sticky, sticky mud.....it didn't get better.....it got worse.....and poor Pikey.....not only was he

knee stuffed he now had gastro.....so we were moving at about 1k/per hour..... after 5hous the mud ended and we hit the river and a big 4WD track.....but we had to get Pikey up there.....so Superman towed, Gary pushed and Pikey just sat on the bike.....the 5k took us an hour.....as we had to stop every 1k for Pikey to regather himself.....we arrived at Farquars at around 1am still in 11th place!!!! We were dark zoned too....so could not get on the water for the paddle till 6.30am..... so we slept at the TA, still covered in mud, under the heaters.....

Leg 12 Paddle 70k / Trek 12k – 6.30am came and went.....and so did other teams.....Pikey was not good.....so we told him to sleep more.....he rose at 9.30 and gave us the thumbs up.....we left the TA at 10am.....and got on the water at 11.30am (it was a 5k walk back down the hill to the Arthur River) Gary & I in the Toyboy, Pikey & Superman in the Sevyllor. Gary does the Nav.....he is amazing.....negotiating rapids and reading the map along the way.....he monitors every twist and turn on the Arthur.....and yells out “rapido” every time we near some tricky white water.....we are having a ball....the sun is shining.....the scenery is just magical.....and we are getting closer to the end of our journey! We nail the two CP’s on foot, but take a long time as Pikey can’t bend his knee.....every step for him is such an effort....but Pikey battles on.....and somehow makes his way off the cliff on return from CP 43 in Wynsmith Hills. The dark zone is looming and we opt to stop at a bridge at 7.10am.....within minutes the boys have a raging fire to warm us up (oh and helped the Czech Team (Addidas–Terrex) who stopped nearby , light one too)we needed the fire as Gary and I had an unexpected swim just minutes before in some rapids and it was just cold.....I was glad I packed the “Jet Boil” as I boiled some water and we had some nice, hot country cuisine, noodles and soup (just add water). We also were glad we took our sleeping bags and that we could all fit in the tent.....in bed by 9pm.....woken at 4am by a thunderstorm (do they have thunder storms in Tassie we thought.....obviously they do????). Luke climbs into the tent (as he was sleeping by the fire) and we wait till 5.30.....we get up get dressed and back on the water by 6.30. More rapids, walked to CP 44 up a creek over some cliffs etc. (we should have paddled up against the current.....for Pikey that would have been nicer than walking).....and by 2.30pm we were at the TA at Kununnah Bridge. Only a bike/trek/bike to go!!!!

Leg 13 MTB 70k – Luke gets the maps ready to go, we have a pretty quick transition, and we get dry gear on and set off ahead of the Czechs. It is overcast, drizzly but surprisingly warmPikey can’t ride.....so we opt to push and tow him on this leg.....Superman at the front, Gary pushing.....mewell all I can do is help push on the up hills.....Superman is flying.....! We have a few big hills before we reach CP46 at Black River.....and find that the Czechs have snuck in front of us....they went around rather than over the big hill.....oh well we just like to do it the hard way....obviously! So in under 3½ hours we get to Rocky Cape Tavern.....I type up our blog.....all in good spirits.....can’t wait for Champagne, Pizza and CHICKEN!

Leg 14 Costal Trek 25k

Only 25k to go.....not long before we will be sipping champagne (Aunty Jan gets excited back at HQ and tries to find a chicken.....she stays up all night anticipating the teams arrival)we stride out of the TA....the notes say 4–8 hrswe think

we will take 8.....but now Pikey is on fire.....he's walking faster with one straight leg than I can walk normally.....a man on a mission (he just wants the pain to be over). We get CP 48 & 49 easily then start the climb up over Rocky Cape headland before making the descent down to the beach on our way to CP 50 (The GUT) at Anniversary Point. Now things just got tougher.....the rocks were sharp and difficult to walk on in the dark.....we could not see much ahead.....Pikey was struggling.....and so was I.....a few false points deceive us.....but we know when we get the right one....we just can't find the CP.....Superman stumbles upon it just as we were about to turn back.....Lucky! We were out of there fastgetting to Sisters Beach.....but there is more headland.....and one more CP.....a track/creek crossing on the Two Sisters Peak.....up, up, up we go.....the track flattens.....we count steps.....no obvious creek line.....we continue....find the second creek.....check it's the second.....and then backtrack.....still no CP51.....so we just do a grid search of the area. Obviously other teams had to do the same.....Gary yells out "I got it", there was a huge sigh of relief! Not far now.....but it did not get any easier.....we had a rather tricky drop off to navigate.....and many rocky beaches! They were stunning and beautiful beaches.....one full of shiny granite pebbles and easy to walk over.....others very sharp rocky outcrops.....full of deep crevices.....we follow the coastal markers and finally make it to Boat Harbour..... that Trek took us 11hours.....we can't believe it! We see other teams bikes.....we think, "Oh no we are going to get caught".....we think the Czechs have done this leg 3hrs faster than us.....Superman says let's go.....and he's off

The FINALE Leg 15 35k MTB to Burnie – Wednesday

A thunderstorm is looming.....the sun is rising.....a golden retriever is chasing playfully and almost takes Pikey out.....he is on tow (no not the dog), Gary & I can't catch them on that steep uphill out of Boat Harbour.....crash & boom.....thunder & lightning.....pelting rain.....we drop the dog on the



descent to the highway.....and power on.....somehow! I am freezing..... saturated.....and can barely keep up.....because when Superman goes – he just goes! Pikey is not pedalling.....Gary has bonked & tries to stuff a Caramello, Chokito and Crunchie into his mouth all at once..... I catch up.....we stop.....Pikey is freezing (cos he's not moving) so he puts on his fleece, we put on our rain gear.....it does little...as we are drenched.....just 15k to go! It starts to clear as we head out

of Wynyard.....we see signs to Burnie....12k.....we pedal & pedal our little legs off.....and soon we see the stadium.....we have 1 ½ laps of the velodrome.....Aunty Jan hands me the Aussie flag.....& Team Mountain Designs/ Tri Adventure.....proudly completes the lap flying that Aussie Flag proudly. Team Mountain Designs – Tri Adventure crosses the line to finish XPD in 13th place (3rd Australian Team).....we can't believe we have made it to the end.....we have tears in our eyes.....suddenly I come to a standstill.....the flag gets caught in my brakes (oops.....I wasn't the only one). We are greeted by Craig & Louise and directed up

to the lounge where we are rewarded with Pizza, Champagne and.....CHICKEN!!!!!! We get to relax on the couch for a while – dressed in strange brown Monks outfits.....we were very cold and wet.....but we were stuck to that couch! I ate chicken, chicken and more chicken & we all shared stories with anyone who was there to listen.....lots of volunteers who have been working tirelessly hours and hours on end.....while we've been out in the wilderness for 6 days!

The Czech team comes in so we move off the couch....and somehow walk to the car. Auntie Jan drives us back to our new accommodation cabin....this one looks very flash....unlike the 'disabled' one we had previously..... "Hmmm, maybe we need that one now", Gary remarks. We all have a shower, a snooze, get up and head into Burnie for a coffee. Soon it's happy-hour at HQ. We see other teams finish. We have a few drinks. Canadian Club for Pikey, Gary & I and Ruski's for Luke. We ask some locals where you get the best steak around here. They say Top of the Town....so we head on up to this rather dodgy looking pub and order the biggest meals on the menu....and eat them!

THURSDAY.... The race is over....or is it??? I am still racing in my sleep, and when I get up teams are still out on the course. We watch the live tracker to see who is still out there – and where they are. We are glued to our phones and our computer. We see that the Dancing Pandas have finished and the Mawson makes their way to the finish. Pikey wants a haircut, manicure and some face cream, but we have work to do. We have boxes and boxes to unpack, clothes to wash, shoes to clean and bikes to scrub.....so we spend most of the day doing just that. Gary finds he has lots of 'towers' left so starts eating them. We have to line up for the washing machines as other teams who have finished are doing the same thing. The race never really stops....

We take a drive out to Boat Harbour to show the boys how beautiful it is in daylight. We felt like swimming in the pristine water....but it was way too cold for that! We tried to show Jan where we were on the rocky coastline the night before....and where the amazing pebble beach was. We so wanted to go there – but our tired and broken bodies would not let us. The boys hit the Top of the Town pub for dinner again. Superman, who we thought actually lived on Coco-pops and Nutella, loves his mixed grills. Jan & I settle for local fish & chips at the surf club – washed down with a glass of champagne, of course!



FRIDAY....Teams were still finishing! One of these is our Tri Adventure team of Howie, Justin, Paddy & Audrey (Audrey had withdrawn earlier due to illness, but joined the boys for the final trek and bike back to Burnie). It was so exciting to be there at HQ for their finish....to see their faces, and hear their stories. Soon after, we see

Shazza's team, It's all Good, cross the line....but it's not all good.... Shazza's feet had blown up like balloons....but she didn't care, she was glad to be finished, and glad to see us there....hugs all around.... The final 'ranked' team to finish was Latitude 19.....they had, at long last finished an XPD ranked.....and after many years of trying, they get through the toughest one ever....Way to go Linda & team!█

AWARDS CEREMONY.... Lots of Tasmanian Reds & Whites were consumed by us....Keeping up his reputation; Gary was first in line for the sausages.... We celebrated the evening with fellow competitors and volunteers and were very proud of our good friend Kev Piercy from Mawson who won the all-male category.....Kev spoke very modestly of their achievements....



We ended the evening watching all the videos of the up-coming 2012 AR World Series events. Thanks to Craig & Louise from Geocentric for the experience of a lifetime and thanks to our sponsors – Mountain Designs, Tri Adventure, Salomon, and Hammer Nutrition for being a part of our team. Finally thanks to our families and friends for putting up with us in the lead up to this event and for all the support you provided through emails, sms, Facebook and trail mail.....you all played a big part in our getting over that line!

So....what's next for Team Mountain Designs??

Pikey....I'm definitely not doing something like this again....but I'm in for Geoquest...

Kim.... I'm keen for another expedition race....but must do more walking....and definitely in for Geo...and maybe Godzone....



Gary.... Can't believe he's thinking about another long onemaybe Godzone....and definitely Geoquest

Lukey..... I'm in for Geoquest....not sure about Godzone because of M2M (Superman has to defend his title)

So no doubt I'll see you out there soon....☺

Written by Kim – Team Mountain Designs/Tri Adventure November 2011

PS: Pikey is recovering well.... he's back in Melbourne recuperating. Frozen peas on his feet, ice on his knee and finally the eye cream he has been missing....[We love you Princess Pikey aka "Fluff n Stuff"](#) ☺

